

NAMI Connection Mission Statement: There will be a NAMI Connection recovery support group within reasonable traveling distance for every person in America who lives with a mental illness, every day of the week.

North Dakota Gets Connected!

This October, we welcomed North Dakota as the 47th state to join the Connection program. Nine trainees met in Grand Forks for their first facilitator training, led by Connection training manager Anna Goodwin. All nine trainees were certified to facilitate. They will be starting groups in Grand Forks, Fargo, Devil's Lake and Minot. Their state coordinator, Barb Dahlen, attended as well and will be facilitating in Grand Forks. We are excited to have the North Dakota team on board and look forward to seeing their groups develop!

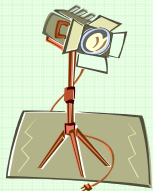


Testimonials

I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group facilitator for the past year. I had no idea it would be such a rewarding and growing experience. I have been able to see people living with mental illness get better before my eyes in a relatively short period of time, as I used the Connection model. I have also found myself grow in leadership qualities such as patience, compassion and love. I instituted in my group what other facilitators have taught me, the "NAMI Hug"—and have found how this has brought out the self-esteem of my Connection group members. Thank you NAMI National Connection leaders for all your hard work in making this a better and better program over the past year.

-With great respect, Two Lenz

Coordinator Spotlight:



Bryce "Randy" Willingham

What is your current role in the Connection program in your state? I am a Connection facilitator, state Connection coordinator, member of NAMI state board of directors and a state Connection trainer.

What are some innovative things you are doing with Connection? I initiated the state conference call. I am also a guest co-facilitator at meetings in southern Nevada. In addition, I petitioned the state board for a fuel allotment for facilitators in rural areas who are providing transportation for consumers.

What do you like best about Connection? I think that one of the things I like best about Connection is the unlimited support from the national Connection team and the ability to learn from other facilitators on the conference calls.

Tell us a little about you. What are some of your favorite hobbies or past times? I enjoy designing and building Fabergé ostrich eggs.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish. My current goal is the completion of a statewide network for individuals living with mental illness known as HOPE of NEVADA and to partner with NAMI for the purpose of placing our recently trained peer specialists in mental health clinics throughout the state.

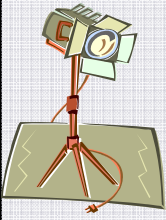


Want to share a positive Connection thought? Please e-mail testimonials to connection@nami.org

Program Progress

Facilitator Trainings: 169
Facilitators Trained: 2,464
Support Groups: 514

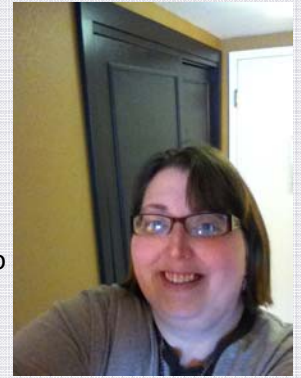
For more information on the NAMI Connection program, please visit www.nami.org/connection or call the HelpLine at 1 (800) 950-NAMI (6264)



Facilitator Spotlight: Sharame Vodraska

What is your current role in the Connection program in your state? I am currently a facilitator for NAMI Connection. I recently received my certificate for becoming a state trainer. I have not yet scheduled my first training session.

What are some innovative things you are doing with Connection? Prior to my last class Peer-to-Peer class we tried to assemble, I took Peer-to-Peer and Connection materials in to the veterans hospital in my hometown. I also took materials in to the behavioral center for the two counties near where I live. I am very active in fundraising for both our Connection group and the Consumer Council executive committee.



What do you like best about Connection? What I like best about Connection is the format that allows everyone who wants to share to have a chance to share. It is very well structured.

Tell us a little about you. What are some of your favorite hobbies or past times? My hobbies are reading, listening to music and talking with my friends. I have been playing violin since middle school, and I love movies. I have completed some college and, some day, if it works out I would like to go back. I am the secretary of the state of Indiana's Consumer Council executive committee, and I send our minutes out after each meeting.

Tell us one goal you wish to accomplish. I am hoping to be trained for the In Our Own Voice program soon as well. I hope to complete training to be a certified recovery specialist sometime in 2011. I am hoping to gain part time employment with this.

This Month: Honoring Our Veterans



In honor of Veteran's Day, which is Nov. 11, the Connection team decided to do a feature on Royal Riddick and his work with the Baltimore VA hospital. Royal is a national trainer for both NAMI's Connection and In Our Own Voice programs. He has been working with NAMI for 12 years as part of the In Our Own Voice program. He sits on the Board of Directors of NAMI Maryland and the Maryland Consumer Leadership Coalition (MCLC) and is the vice president of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Association of Peer Support Specialists (MAPSS).

Royal started a Connection group for Veterans at the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center of the Baltimore Veteran's Association hospital, where he works as a case manager and peer support technician. Since its inception in July of 2009, the Vet Connection group has become one of the most popular groups in the mental health services department. In fact, the Vet Connection group grew so big that a new group was created just for members who are in recovery, but still want the support that the Vet Connection group provides. Royal and his colleagues are considering a third group for inpatients at the Baltimore VA.

The Baltimore Vet Connection group has also graduated four members to facilitator status, and more are waiting to get trained. Additionally, two other hospitals in the Veteran's Integrated Service Network, one in Washington, D.C., and one in Perry Point, Md., hope to have their own veterans trained to start Vet Connection groups at their facilities.

In addition to his work with NAMI and the Veteran's Administration, Royal is a certified peer specialist, a certified mental health first aid instructor and has been trained to teach social skills training to Vets through the VA Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC). We are grateful for his service to NAMI and his dedication to area veterans!



Special thanks to Royal Riddick for contributing to this article!



Congratulations to Dr. Candace True!

On Friday, Oct. 22, NAMI Connection facilitator and state trainer Dr. Candace True received NAMI South Carolina's Volunteer of the Year award at the NAMI South Carolina State Conference in Columbia, S.C. Dr. True works as a program specialist in the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Center at Dorn VA Hospital in Columbia. She facilitates several support groups that meet regularly at the VA Hospital, including one exclusively for female veterans. She received her South Carolina Connection state trainer instruction at a training in St. Louis earlier this year and conducted a training for veteran facilitators this fall. As an Army veteran who served in Bosnia and Kosovo, Dr. True understands the importance of reaching out to returning soldiers living with mental illness. Says Dr. True about her work with the Connection program: "Being awarded the Volunteer of the Year award is quite an honor. I love what I do in my life. I take advantage of every opportunity that is available to me and while I am busy doing things that benefit me in my recovery, it is incredibly humbling when someone reaches out and shakes my hand saying thank you for the difference you have made in my life. I am thankful to be in a situation where I can volunteer for things that make such a difference for other people."

Special thanks to Betsey O'Brian and Dr. Candace True for contributing to this article!

NAMI Connection Frequently Asked Question: How Do We Handle Discussions About Religion in Group Meetings?



Group members may share a variety of things during a meeting that have been helpful to their recovery, including alternative healing and social opportunities. Many people who are doing well in recovery express a strong faith life as a contributing factor to their wellness and their ability to handle the stresses of their illness. Talking about one's religious beliefs with regards to one's wellness is not inappropriate. If someone starts trying to convert other group members (proselytize), gently remind them that the group is about each person making his or her own decisions based on what they hear about other group members' experiences. It is a time to share what has worked for them in their experience, not to tell other participants what they should do.

Group members should be expected to listen respectfully to others sharing what works for them without judging or becoming defensive if they disagree. Be aware that the conversation could be a trigger for someone in the group, depending on where they are in their recovery. Don't allow others to be disrespectful to the person who is sharing. If the discussion goes outside sharing group wisdom, gently direct the group back to the topic or personal issue that started the discussion and ask the group about "constructive, practical and helpful" information that does not focus on spirituality, religion or faith.



Monthly Facilitator Calls

Conference call number: 1 (888) 858-6021
Conference Pass code: 4294442760

Facilitators are welcome on all calls, just pick the time and date that works best with your schedule!

November Facilitator Call Schedule

Nov. 2, 1 p.m.	Nov. 4, 7 p.m.
Nov. 10, 4 p.m.	Nov. 16, 1 p.m.
Nov. 18, 7 p.m.	Nov. 24, 4 p.m.

Upcoming Trainings

- Nov. 12-14: Peoria, Ill.
- Nov. 12-14: Winnsboro, S.C.
- Nov. 12-14: Woodbury, Minn.
- Nov. 13-14: Des Moines, Iowa
- Nov. 13-14: Portland, Ore.
- Nov. 13-14: Sacramento, Calif.
- Nov. 22-24: Sun City, Calif.
- Nov. 29-Dec. 1: York, Pa.
- Dec. 3-5: NYC-Metro
- Dec. 3-5: Montgomery, Ala.
- Dec. 3-5: Montpelier, Vt.
- Dec. 10-12: Philadelphia, Pa.
- Dec. 10-12: Riverside, Calif.



NAMI Connection is on Facebook

Check us out!!

www.facebook.com/thenamiconnection

We want to thank everyone who has become a fan of NAMI Connection on Facebook—we have now reached over 640 people who "like" us! Some great testimonials, up-to-date program information and fan photos can be found on the site...

Do YOU like NAMI Connection?

Have you had any recent **recognition events** in your community for NAMI Connection facilitators and/or trainers? Let us know so we can spotlight the event in one of our upcoming newsletters!

connection@nami.org

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